

A CURRENCY OF FAITH: TAKING STOCK  
IN UTAH COUNTY'S DREAM MINE

by

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## ABSTRACT

In 1894, John Hyrum Koyle began digging the Dream Mine, on a mountaintop in central Utah. Koyle, a Mormon bishop, had been shown where to dig, he said, by Moroni, the same heavenly messenger who had led Mormon founder Joseph Smith to unearth the golden plates. Moroni visited Koyle in a dream and showed him nine enormous caverns below the mountain, containing countless piles of gold. Moroni told Koyle that the gold would remain hidden in the caves until an unspecified time preceding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. At that moment of chaos, Koyle and his followers would unearth the gold and it would support the financially-troubled Mormon Church through the Last Days.

This thesis investigates the nature of belief in the Dream Mine, which remains fervent more than 100 years later. Although their dreams are perpetually deferred, believers tap into a rich vein of folklore that runs through Mormon cosmology. Over the past thirty years, the Dream Mine has enabled believers to maintain a psychic link to a magical past, as their church adapts to a changing, modern world. This thesis will consider how Dream Mine belief has evolved in a changing economic, political, and religious landscape, and demonstrate that the faithful find sustenance in the Mormon past while simultaneously embracing modern worldviews that extend beyond mainstream Mormonism.

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## INTRODUCTION: THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

In May 2007, a crowd assembled in the convention hall at the veterans' center in Spanish Fork, Utah for the Relief Mine Company's annual stockholders' meeting. An almost festive air preceded the official meeting, as about 100 people gathered, investors in the company who had come to hear the annual financial report on the 113-year-old mining venture. Chatter and laughter filled the hall; conversations sprang up where they had left off at the previous year's stockholders meeting. The majority of stockholders were older people from the surrounding area, the south of Utah County where the Relief Mine is located. A handful of stockholders came from farther away, some from Salt Lake City, about fifty miles to the north, others from neighboring Idaho. Nearly all were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons. Many brought children and grandchildren, some of whom ran between rows of chairs, playing tag. Relief Mine stock, since becoming available in 1909, has become something of a family heirloom, passed down from one generation to the next, and the meeting had a distinct family feel. One family had a table of books for sale, including an eschatological history of the Relief Mine. A husband and wife team moved about the crowd, striking up friendly conversations and handing out brochures describing various end-time prophecies and

their imminent fulfillment. Two old friends reclined in folding chairs, sun burnt in their well-worn jeans and dusty work boots, swapping prophecies about the Last Days.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the cheerful air that preceded it, the official meeting was short and solemn. Company secretary Ray Koyle, a great-grandson of the man who had founded the mine in 1894, conducted the business of the day. It was a process that took only a few minutes because the Relief Mine Co. – known locally as the “Dream Mine” – does little business. In fact, the company has done no actual mining for over four decades; it has few operating expenses and brings in only a scant income. The total fixed assets of the Relief Mine Co. were just over \$3.5 million for 2006, according to Koyle’s review of the balance sheet and profit-and-loss statement. Total net income for the year was about \$41,000 coming largely from rents collected on property and revenue from a small gravel pit the business operates. After his quick accounting, Ray Koyle called for the assembly to pray and on adjournment asked “everyone gathered here to take note of their feelings about this project. Let’s focus on next year, and wait.”<sup>2</sup>

Waiting is something that Dream Mine stockholders have practiced repeatedly. In the nearly 100 years since the operation went public, shareholders have never received a dividend. During that time the mine has never produced a significant profit. The “Dream Miners” have never unearthed a single ounce of valuable ore.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The May 14, 2007, meeting was open to the public and attended by the author, who took notes and conducted a number of spontaneous, casual conversations and interviews with attendees. The stock was first sold in 1909 under the name Koyle Mining Co.; the company reorganized in 1961 as Relief Mine Co., allowing existing shareholders to transfer their stock.

<sup>2</sup> Relief Mine Co. annual stockholder meeting, May 14, 2007, Spanish Fork, Utah.

<sup>3</sup> Officers in the company as well as a number of stockholders would argue the point. At various times in its history, the company has published assays showing moderately valuable deposits of gold and platinum ore. However a number of independent analyses of samples from the mines have always contradicted those tests and shown negligible amounts of valuable minerals. For an examination of the assay tests done of Dream Mine samples see James P. Christianson, “An Historical Study of the Koyle Relief Mine” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962), 124-127.



Nevertheless, stockholders remain committed. At present, at least 706 people own stock in the Relief Mine Co. and investors seeking to purchase a stake in the mine happily place their names on a waiting list for the chance to pay \$30 to \$35 for a single share – shares with a real value, by the most generous accounting, of less than \$10.00 each.<sup>4</sup>

Stockholders willing to talk about the mine typically discuss their unrealized investment with a sense of awe and reverence, often expressing the strong tie they have to their stake in the company. L. DeLynn “Doc” Hansen, a Utah County native, bought his first piece of the Relief Mine – 100 shares – in 1980 for \$3.00 a share. “I was new in practice, and we were poor,” Hansen, a chiropractor, remembers. “I just pulled out the three hundred dollars and said, ‘Here you go.’ My wife didn’t even question it, our last three hundred dollars to our name and she didn’t even question it.”<sup>5</sup>

Why, despite the lack of any measurable success, does Relief Mine stock remain an object of desire? Beyond any material value, what does the mine reveal about Mormon belief? How has its meaning changed over time? Such questions demand context. To ascertain the real value of Dream Mine stock this essay will explore the community of Dream Mine believers who look beyond the material world to a confirming past and the promise of the future. For them, the mine’s true pot of gold exists not in a material world, but in a world yet to come. Although they were in the mainstream of the LDS church at

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<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to determine the exact number of stockholders who have bought and sold shares since the company went public in 1909, because stock that has not been registered with the company is typically not counted in the official company tally. The above number of stockholders in 2007 comes from the figures cited by Ray Koyle, company secretary, at the May 2007 stockholder meeting. The actual number of people who possess shares is thought to be considerably higher, perhaps closer to 2,000. According to the company, there are 463,000 “active” shares outstanding on the Relief Mine. With a net worth of \$3.5 million, the one-to-one “real” value of each share is \$7.56. In fact, the total number of shares in circulation is likely to be closer to 700,000, according to numerous sources, including Christianson, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” ix.

<sup>5</sup> L. DeLynn “Doc” Hansen, interview by author, 26 October 2007, Orem, UT, tape recording.

the beginning of their quest in the early twentieth century, over time Dream Mine believers would diverge from Mormon orthodoxy and have to draw sustenance from other religious communities to sustain their faith.

## EXCAVATING BELIEF: FAITH, FUNCTION, AND THE DREAM MINE

On a warm September day in 1894, John Hyrum Koyle drove a pick into the rocky soil of a cone-shaped mountain that overlooked a wide swath of farmland along the southeastern shore of Utah Lake. Koyle knew exactly where to dig. Koyle, a Mormon bishop who led a congregation known as a ward, claimed to have received a nighttime visitation from the Angel Moroni, the same heavenly messenger who had visited Joseph Smith decades earlier and then led the founder of the LDS Church to unearth a set of ancient gold plates that became the Book of Mormon. Moroni raised Koyle into the air and brought him into a mountain, through more than 1,000 feet of solid rock, until the angel focused the bishop's attention on a formation of thick, white quartz with an unmistakable vein of gold, valuable ore so accessible that it looked "like a fish ready for the frying pan."<sup>6</sup>

The Angel Moroni instructed Koyle that God had chosen him to open the mine under the mountain, but told him that the gold would not "come in" until the Last Days, before the second coming of Jesus Christ. God had ordained the gold to provide relief for Latter-day Saints during the days of trials and tribulations before the Millennium. Koyle promised believers that the mine would finance the literal gathering of Israel. A week

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<sup>6</sup> Norman C. Pierce, *The Dream Mine Story* (Salt Lake City: Privately printed, 1972), 12. This is Pierce retelling the story "as [Koyle] told it to hundreds of us so many times," 8. Though referred to as "dreams," Koyle's nighttime visitations and experiences are taken as literal events by believers. Over the years, a joke developed among some of Koyle's detractors who said that on nights Koyle's wife served liver and onions he would have a new "dream" or revelation, see Christianson, "Historical Study of the Relief Mine," 31.

later, Koyle and a small band of Utah County Mormons began digging into the mountain in earnest, proclaiming their excavation the “Dream Mine.”

Historians and folklorists have examined the Dream Mine narrative, offering interpretations of a story that continues to inspire faith. The most important primary sources for these scholars come from the true believers who followed Koyle. With Koyle leaving no written account of his life, the work of publicizing his calling was taken up by two stockholders who were convinced of the prophecies concerning the mine. Norman Pierce styled himself a “preserver” of the story and saw God’s hand in the mine. Ogden Kraut, who worked at the mine in the 1940s, called Koyle the only prophet he had ever met. In his self-published chronicle of the Dream Mine, Kraut gave voice to the belief of many stockholders, declaring: “John H. Koyle was a man of simple faith and education, but he had a gift from God. ...His prophecies were not given for entertainment or curiosity; they were meant to convey a message of warning.”<sup>7</sup>

As chroniclers of the Dream Mine, Pierce and Kraut reconstructed the history of the mine and its founder to echo important narratives from their Mormon faith. They deliberately crafted Koyle’s history to mirror that of Mormon founder Joseph Smith and they intentionally retold the mine’s story in a way that reverberated with well-known accounts of LDS origins. Koyle himself was divinely instructed “never to make a written statement” about the mine, leaving Pierce and Kraut to rely on conversations with the faithful and Koyle himself. Pierce began compiling notes in 1934 for what would become *The Dream Mine Story*, a narrative he constructed from stories “repeated again and again by leading stockholders with some variations.” Pierce freely admitted that “it was not always easy to pin down the true and correct version every time,” but nonetheless

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<sup>7</sup> Ogden Kraut, *John H. Koyle’s Relief Mine* (Dugway, Utah: Kraut’s Pioneer Press, 1978), 186.

fashioned a story designed to mirror the founding miracles of Mormonism and thereby engender belief in Koyle's mine.<sup>8</sup> Kraut knew the mine's founder only briefly, and based his retelling of the story on Pierce's book, and tales related by fellow believers. For both, the story of John Koyle and the Dream Mine was a narrative that echoed Mormonism's origins and paralleled the life of LDS founder Joseph Smith. In their hands, the Dream Mine narrative hearkened back to the founding of the one true church and glowed with the fervor of divine authority.

The first scholarly work on the Dream Mine was James Christianson's 1962 master's thesis "An Historical Study of the Koyle Relief Mine." His research included valuable interviews with members of Koyle's family and a number of the earliest and most devout stockholders, offering insight into the mine's community of believers and the "unquestioning devotion of hundreds of believers."<sup>9</sup> A valuable history, Christianson's thesis nevertheless does not focus on the belief system of Dream Mine stockholders, but on the nuts and bolts of the endeavor, its operations and finances.

More recently, the mine has surfaced in D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, John L. Brooke's *The Refiner's Fire*, and *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*, by Jon Krakauer. The mine, in these accounts, warrants mere passing reference and is used to illustrate specific points. Quinn discusses the mine in three paragraphs and relies heavily on Kraut's book. For Quinn, the story of the mine (and official church denouncement) is a tidy way to demonstrate how the LDS Church moved away from its treasure-hunting roots after 1890. Unfortunately, Quinn oversimplifies the mine's history, ignoring the intricacies of belief that hundreds of

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<sup>8</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, i.-ii.

<sup>9</sup> Christianson, "Historical Study of the Relief Mine," 124.

modern Mormons still hold in the Dream Mine. Brooke, too, makes quick reference, connecting the Dream Mine to violent fundamentalists. Krakauer, who admittedly relied almost exclusively on the Kraut narrative, similarly leaves the impression that mine dreamers are likely Mormon fundamentalists and violent.<sup>10</sup>

Mormon folklorists have shown more interest in the mine than historians.

Wayland D. Hand mentioned Koyle in his 1941 article in *The Journal of American Folklore*, placing the story of the Dream Mine within the broader realm of Utah mining lore. In the next decade, Austin and Alta Fife's *Saints of Sage and Saddle: Folklore Among the Mormons* appeared, and briefly recounted the story of Koyle and the mine in a few pages, as part of a catalog of Utah folklore. In 1983, Hand revisited his research on the Dream Mine for *Dialogue*. He presented Koyle as an inheritor of "treasure lore handed down from ancient times in Europe and brought to America early," noting, however, that Dream Mine lore "assigns beneficent guardians to the earth's treasures and divine purposes to their movements ... a radical departure from the usual association of treasure with the devil."<sup>11</sup>

Another important account of Dream Mine folklore is Joe Stanley Graham's 1970 master's thesis. Graham compiled a host of newspaper-clippings, maps, local anecdotes, and interviews with Koyle's contemporaries and a number of now-deceased stockholders. It provides a necessary tool for understanding the role of the mine in what Graham calls the "Dream Mine sub-culture." He unearths the lode of Mormon folklore buried within

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<sup>10</sup> D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 210-211; John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 297; and Jon Krakauer, *Under The Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (New York: MacMillan, 2003), 93-97.

<sup>11</sup> Wayland D. Hand, "Magic and the Supernatural in Utah Folklore," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (Winter 1983): 60; see also Wayland D. Hand, "Folklore From Utah's Silver Mining Camps," *The Journal of American Folklore* 54 (July-December 1941): 132-161; and Austin Fife and Alta Fife, *Saints of Sage and Saddle: Folklore Among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1980).

the narrative, including the Mormon story of the Three Nephites, a trio of ancient men from the Book of Mormon granted immortality by Jesus. Graham points to other well-known Mormon folk themes – treasure hunting, angelic visitations, and the gift of prophesy – to “examine the function which folklore served in the [Dream Mine] movement, in spreading its influence and helping to preserve the sub-culture.”<sup>12</sup>

Dream Mine scholars have marked a path, but offer little information about its destination. The work of mining and logistics of investment are clear. So, too, are the stories that tell tales of supernatural adventure. Yet, why does the mine remain vibrant more than 100 years after its discovery? How does the Dream Mine narrative nurture a community of believers?

#### First Vision: The Red Heifer Dream

Norman Pierce and Ogden Kraut never doubted the mine because its dreamer and his vision were embedded in the Mormon world. Their narratives rely on Mormon themes. John Hyrum Koyle was the son of two Mormon pioneers: John Hyrum Koyle, Sr. and Adlinda Hillman. They were born in Nauvoo and made the trek westward to Utah as children, growing up in the Mormon “colony” of Spanish Fork. John, the couple’s second child, was born on August 14, 1864. Within four years of his birth, Koyle’s family received a mission call from LDS President Brigham Young, sending them to the so-called “Muddy Mission” nearly 400 miles away in southern Utah, where church authorities hoped to establish a cotton colony. Life on the Muddy River was hard, and no doubt the early years of Koyle’s life saw many hardships as agricultural failures and near-starvation plagued the venture. LDS authorities in Salt Lake City eventually abandoned

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<sup>12</sup> Joe Stanley Graham, “The Dream Mine: A Study in Mormon Folklore,” (M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970), 41.

their plan for the Muddy Mission and the “colonists” were allowed to return home. The Koyle family moved back to Spanish Fork in 1871 with little to show for their efforts.<sup>13</sup>

As a child, John Koyle developed a reputation as a pious boy who often reminded his elders of their duties to the Mormon faith. By age fourteen he had forgone a formal education and begun making his living as a mule-skinner, traveling throughout the south of Utah County by mule and cart, selling various goods to farmers. In 1884, the year he turned twenty, Koyle married Emily Arvilla Holt. The newlyweds moved onto a farm in the lush river bottoms south of Spanish Fork, in a tiny settlement known as Riverside, which would later be called Leland.<sup>14</sup>

Though raised in a devout LDS household, and despite his reported faithfulness, Koyle could not testify to a “burning in the bosom” about the truth of the Book of Mormon and LDS theology.<sup>15</sup> In accordance with Mormon belief, and in search of a deeper faith, the young man began to pray earnestly. He withdrew to a small grove of willow trees near the Spanish Fork River, dropped to his knees, and beseeched the Lord for the worthiness to receive, through the Holy Ghost, an unwavering testimony of faith. But when he rose from his knees he was crestfallen. He “noticed nothing different than

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<sup>13</sup> Pearson Starr Corbett, “A History of the Muddy Mission,” (M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968). See also W. Paul Reeve, *Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners and Southern Paiutes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 86-90, and Henry B. Eyring, “Remembrance and Gratitude,” *Ensign* (Nov 1989): 11.

<sup>14</sup> Information about Koyle’s youth comes from a Christianson interview with Ellen Rose Fillmore, younger sister of John Koyle, conducted in 1957, as well as his personal correspondence with Eveline K. Stout, of Burley, Idaho, Koyle’s daughter. See Christianson “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 16-18.

<sup>15</sup> A testimony of the truth of the Mormon gospel, through the Holy Ghost, is an experience often called a “burning in the bosom.” This phrase is from a passage in Doctrine and Covenants (D&C), a book of Joseph Smith’s collected revelations and part of the Mormon canon: “Study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore you shall feel that it is right.” D&C 9:8. See also Luke 24:32; and Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d Ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 785.



when he began to pray. No answer seemed eminent [sic], nor was any further testimony obtained.”<sup>16</sup>

But God did answer him in a mysterious way that assured his faith. Pierce tells of Koyle’s dream that night, one preceding his encounter with the Angel Moroni. In this dream, Koyle recalled seeing a cow, a red heifer<sup>17</sup> that had been lost about three weeks earlier. He had almost given up hope of finding the wayward bovine. In the dream, Koyle saw the heifer clearly, standing in a place he recognized, a far-off field below the Union Pacific railroad tracks. The cow faced east, with its right horn broken so that the point stuck into the creature’s eye.<sup>18</sup>

Koyle remembered hearing a voice that asked:

“If you find your cow at this place tomorrow, will you believe that the Restored [LDS] Gospel is true?”

“And unhesitatingly, John heard himself say ‘Yes, sir!’ ”<sup>19</sup>

The next morning, Koyle rode out to the field below the railroad tracks, and as he had envisioned in his dream, there stood his red heifer, with the broken horn, looking at him, contentedly munching its cud.

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<sup>16</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 27. This story also appears in Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 5, and Christianson, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 47, who cites the personal memoir of C.F. Weight, a laborer at the mine.

<sup>17</sup> The “red heifer” carries Biblical significance as part of a Judaic purification ritual in which a special cow is sacrificed and reduced to ashes, then used to cleanse anyone who has had contact with a corpse; Numbers 19: 1-13. Certain modern millennialists believe that the discovery of a red heifer will precede the building of the third temple in Jerusalem (see, for example, Rivka Gonen, *Contested Holiness: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Perspectives on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jersey City, N.J.: KATV Publishing House, 2003), 160), but neither the Dream Mine chronicles nor the oral traditions makes any mention of Biblical connection.

<sup>18</sup> Some believers say that Koyle had shown glimpses of his “dreaming” ability as a child, see Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 3, but most seem to agree that the “red heifer dream” is the first example of Koyle’s gift of prophecy.

<sup>19</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 2; despite his use of quotation marks, this is a re-creation Pierce first recorded in the 1930s, later included in his self-published history.

Koyle could now claim his testimony. Not only did he believe the LDS gospel was true, but that God worked through his dreams. Ogden Kraut concluded: “From such a simple but marvelous beginning John H. Koyle received a special spiritual gift. ...He also made a covenant with the Lord that if He would give him [such] dreams and visions, he would serve the Lord all the days of his life.”<sup>20</sup>

The story that both Pierce and Kraut tell of Koyle’s prayer for a testimony recalls the first vision of Joseph Smith, a story Mormons know well. Smith’s “glorious theophany” occurred in 1820, when Mormonism’s founding prophet was fourteen years old and living with his family in the so-called “burned-over district” near Palmyra, New York. Confounded by the chaos of religious faiths, Smith sought to discover the one “true church.” Smith knelt in a “sacred grove” and prayed and, according to his account, God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared in a pillar of light and instructed him to join none of the churches, for “all their creeds were an abomination.”<sup>21</sup> For Dream Mine believers, the parallels were hard to resist. As a latter-day Joseph Smith, Koyle claimed a mantle of legitimacy that followers could understand and confirm.

Koyle’s followers frequently measured their prophet against the founder of Mormonism. Norman Pierce unhesitatingly compared Koyle with Joseph Smith, and believed that both were called to “establish the Church for the Millennium.” Ogden Kraut described Koyle as a “man who knew and talked with Joseph Smith, the Prophet.”<sup>22</sup> Such ideas persist today among believers like Fred Naisbitt, a stockholder from Ogden, Utah,

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<sup>20</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 28. Stockholder Mary H. Frandsen, also recounted the story of the “Red Heifer Dream” in Mary H. Frandsen, interview by Janet W. Hales, Winter 1974, Springville, Utah, interview No. BYU-110, transcript, Fife Folklore Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University Libraries, Logan, Utah.

<sup>21</sup> *Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith-History*, 1:19, [part of the Mormon canon, hereafter JS-H].

<sup>22</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 69, and Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 178-179.

some eighty miles north of the Dream Mine site, who declares fervently: “Koyle is second only to Joseph Smith in the number and accuracy of his prophecies.”<sup>23</sup> Koyle has resonated with Joseph Smith over the years in a way that made the Dream Mine faithful hard to shake from their investment.

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<sup>23</sup> Naisbitt, Fred, letter to author, June 7, 2007.

## BURIED TREASURE: MORONI AND THE FOUNDING OF THE DREAM MINE

A few years after the magical dream that confirmed his Mormon faith, Koyle served an LDS mission to the American South. Historians know very little about Koyle's success as a missionary. He kept no diary, and the available sources make no mention of the converts he won. But a handful of mission-field legends helped establish Koyle's reputation as a visionary, including a story in which the dreamer saved the life of J. Golden Kimball, a future General Authority of the LDS Church.<sup>24</sup> For Dream Mine believers, the story offered more evidence that Koyle was among God's anointed and a vessel of divine purpose.<sup>25</sup>

In 1894, Koyle returned to Utah, his mission service complete. That same year he reported his first revelation about the mine. On the night of August 27, 1894, he received a visitation from an "exalted personage from another world, who was attired in white and radiated intelligence."<sup>26</sup> Koyle claimed that the nighttime visitor was the Angel Moroni, the same heavenly messenger who had visited Joseph Smith and led him to unearth a set of ancient gold plates that would become the Book of Mormon. His appearance to Joseph Smith was regarded as the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy from the Book of Revelation: "I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to

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<sup>24</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 33. The story about Koyle saving the life of the beloved J. Golden Kimball does not appear in any of the common sources on Kimball. For a version of the story, see also Graham, "The Dream Mine," 234.

<sup>25</sup> In addition to Pierce and Kraut, this view is expressed in various internet newsgroup postings at "The-Dream-Mine: We Are Keeping the Dream Alive:" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine>. See for instance message 12484.

<sup>26</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 6.

preach to those who dwell on the earth.”<sup>27</sup> To Mormons, the Angel Moroni is the herald of the “fullness of the everlasting gospel.” The angel’s key role in the Dream Mine narrative granted divine legitimacy to Koyle’s excavation, and his imprimatur tied the Dream Mine to LDS founding miracles.<sup>28</sup>

Moroni roused Koyle from his bed and led him into the chilly night and across a few miles of farmland to a mountain east of his home. With an “an eerie sort of corporeal disintegration,”<sup>29</sup> they passed directly into the mountain, where Koyle experienced a revelation of buried gold. Few of the Mormon faithful could miss the resonance with the origin story of their church. Koyle was surely following in Joseph Smith’s footsteps.

Moroni showed Koyle a rich vein of gold within the mountain, which “would be the means of bringing much needed relief to the Lord’s people.”<sup>30</sup> Another 175 feet down, the angel led him into a cluster of nine enormous caverns hollowed into the heart of the mountain. Supported by massive pillars, the caverns contained uncounted piles of gold coins minted and buried by a group of Nephites, the refugee Hebrews whose story of New World exile is recounted in the Book of Mormon. Dream Miners believe that the Nephites buried a number of other precious items within the mountain caverns, including the Sword of Laban, a sacred weapon from the Book of Mormon; the Urim and Thummim, a pair of “seer stones” Joseph Smith reportedly used in his translation; and the

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<sup>27</sup> Revelations 14:6 (New King James Version); for Mormon beliefs about Moroni see, McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 514; Terry L. Givens *By The Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11-13 and 79; and Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, chap. 5, which examines the importance of folk magic in the account of Joseph Smith’s visitations by Moroni. According to Mormon belief, angels can be “pre-existent spirits,” “translated beings,” or “resurrected personages” (among other types). In Mormon cosmology, other “resurrected” angels include John the Baptist, Peter, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael: McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 35-36.

<sup>28</sup> Most Mormons would be quick to question the appearance of Moroni to anyone other than the head of the LDS Church, who is viewed as a genuine prophet of God and the sole authority able to receive divine revelation pertaining to the church’s future and organization. See Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 120-122.

<sup>29</sup> Zeese Papanikolas, *Trickster in the Land of Dreams* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995): 63.

<sup>30</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 36.

actual gold plates. Because a large portion of the ancient record remained “sealed” by God and was never translated, Dream Miners believe that when they finally cut through the quartz and reach the treasure-filled caverns they will reveal the full dimension of the LDS Gospel.<sup>31</sup>

Punished for wickedness, those ancient Nephites found the caverns sealed against them. According to believers, God ordained that the treasures within, after lying untouched for centuries, would support His church and chosen people during the tribulations of the last days. The Angel Moroni told Koyle that God had chosen him to open the mine under the mountain, but warned that the gold would not “come in” and the Nephite treasure would remain buried until just before the second coming of Jesus Christ, when wars, natural disasters, and the collapse of the American economy would create widespread suffering. Dream Mine gold would not only provide relief, but finance the gathering of Israel. One week following Moroni’s visit, Koyle and a small group of credulous Utah County Mormons began digging.

In carefully constructing Koyle’s history believers Pierce and Kraut confirmed the divine mandate of the mine and further linked Koyle to Joseph Smith. When Moroni first appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823, the angel called the future prophet by name. Then, as Joseph Smith later recalled, the angel said “he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do. ...He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent.”<sup>32</sup> As Ogden Kraut recounted it, this same radiant being

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<sup>31</sup> Christianson cites a personal interview with Dr. Allen Brooksby in 1960, in which Brooksby, a mine assayer, offered his “firm belief” that one of the nine caverns beneath the Dream Mine contained the original gold plates, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 16.

<sup>32</sup> JS-H 1:33.

appeared to Koyle seventy-one years later: “A heavenly messenger came to his home to visit with him. John [Koyle] was informed that he had been chosen to perform a very special work...He was informed about an ancient civilization that once flourished on this continent.”<sup>33</sup>

The similarities between the two stories reinforced the faith of believers, many of whom look to validate Koyle’s prophetic credentials in comparison with Joseph Smith. According to one devout Dream Mine believer: “Bishop Koyle, next to the Prophet Joseph Smith, had more visits with [divine] messengers, including an ancient prophet [Moses] and a latter-day prophet, than any other of our day. He had a mission which compared to that of the Savior.”<sup>34</sup>

Like Joseph Smith, Koyle and his followers embraced what historian D. Michael Quinn has called the “magic world view.”<sup>35</sup> Divine messengers intercede in the material world to bring truth and salvation. Seer stones, ancient secrets on gold plates, and buried treasure were their means to open the eyes of man. And eyes certainly had to be open to what Mormons believed was the coming end of time. Mormons, if not unique, were particularly alert to such manifestations of the divine in their mortal world. At its heart, nineteenth century Mormonism was a religion of eschatology. The church’s founding in 1830 was for Mormons the first event in a divinely ordained sequence that signaled the last days as predicted by Old Testament prophets Daniel and Isaiah. Like its Biblical ancestor, the restored camp of Israel embraced polygamy, revelation, prophetic authority,

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<sup>33</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 36.

<sup>34</sup> L. DeLynn “Doc’ Hansen, in a compilation of Dream Mine material as well as personal testimony, from “Doc’s Dream Mine Book Compilation,” an online document posted in “The-Dream-Mine: We Are Keeping the Dream Alive:” <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/files>, 60.

<sup>35</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, also examines the “religio-magical heritage” of early America in order to show that the folk magic traditions of the frontier were widespread, see esp. Chap. 1; also see Ronald W. Walker, “The Persisting Idea of American Treasure Hunting,” *BYU Studies* 24 (Fall 1984): 429-59.

and temple worship. The one true church would herald the literal gathering of Israel in Jackson County, Missouri, and in defiance of the anti-Christ, battle alongside Jesus to usher in the Millennium.<sup>36</sup>

With Smith's visions in mind, Pierce's and Kraut's narratives authenticated Koyle's venture by appropriating the objects and symbols of the Book of Mormon. The truth had only been partially revealed to Joseph Smith. Now, with the approach of the end times, Moroni had returned to complete his mission. According to Pierce, Koyle provided his followers not only with an essential task in the divine plan, but the means for the faithful to "survive the years of famine and distress while the Lord purges the earth in preparation for His Millennial Reign."<sup>37</sup> Building a stronghold at the foot of the golden mountain, they could shelter the gathering Israelites and provide "relief" until the return to Missouri and the establishment of Zion. Belief in such a divine mission was made secure when the details resonated with and reconfirmed early Mormon beliefs. For Norman Pierce, Ogden Kraut, and the other true believers in the mine, the stories of Smith and Koyle were so entwined that they could not be separated nor denied.

### Sharing the Dream: Koyle Goes Public

For a few years after Moroni's visit, Koyle's project remained little more than a small hole in the ground on the slope of the cone-shaped hill. With a crew of volunteers, mostly neighbors who believed in his prophetic abilities, the excavation went slowly. Digging began in September 1894, but the company was not incorporated for over a decade. Still, as word spread that the visionary Bishop Koyle had begun his treasure

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<sup>36</sup> Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>37</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 64.



quest, people joined the movement, volunteering their time and labor to be a part of a project of holy possibilities.

When Koyle incorporated the Koyle Mining Company in March 1909, shares sold swiftly. The original stock-issue totaled 114,000 shares, of which all but 42,000 went to Koyle and five other company officers. For the most part, according to Norman Pierce, stockholders “represented the credulous but thrifty poor among the Mormons [who] desired to help others and be an instrument of great good among his fellowmen during a time of great distress.”<sup>38</sup>

Unlike American speculators of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who unscrupulously sought fast riches in the burgeoning national economy, few stockholders in the Dream Mine looked for wealth. “The mine is not about gold,” says current believer Kevin Kraut, son of Ogden Kraut. “It is not about making yourself rich; it is a means to an end, to provide help to the needy, and to help do the work of the Lord.”<sup>39</sup> Stockholders are mining for gold, but they dig their treasure to perform the work of God.

While the Dream Mine attracted volunteer laborers and faithful investors, it also drew the attention of the LDS Church, worried that the faithful were being fleeced. In 1913, Mormon Apostle James E. Talmage, a trained geologist, examined a sample from the Dream Mine and declared the ore worthless. The First Presidency issued a statement in the *Deseret News* titled “A Warning Voice” that, while not mentioning Koyle or the Dream Mine, advised all Latter-day Saints against investing “in ventures of any kind on the specious claim of divine revelation or vision or dream ... against mining schemes

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<sup>38</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 14-15.

<sup>39</sup> Kevin Kraut, interview by author, 18 November 2007, Genola, Utah, tape recording.

which have no warrant for success beyond the professed spiritual manifestations of their projectors, and the influence gained over the excited minds of their victims.”<sup>40</sup> Five days after the “Warning” Koyle was removed as bishop of his Utah County congregation, which he had served for over five years. Ironically, Lars Olsen who replaced him as bishop was a dedicated follower of Koyle and a laborer at the mine. In 2007, Olsen’s descendants still owned stock in the Dream Mine.<sup>41</sup>

To the mine’s faithful, the Mormon Church’s opposition reflected both fear and envy of Koyle’s power. The authorities could sanction no revelation at the grassroots that had the potential to challenge their power or spark heresy. Koyle’s followers personalized the dispute: “Bishop Koyle’s prophecies and his dreams began to stir up new commotion and excitement, while faith in the spiritual powers of the Church president began to wane. This kind of embarrassment usually causes jealousy and anger,” wrote Ogden Kraut.<sup>42</sup> If the church appeared united in public, there was some division in the ranks of the leadership. J. Golden Kimball was a stockholder, an LDS General Authority, and a member of the First Council of the Seventy. Carter E. Grant, nephew of church President Heber J. Grant, also owned stock in Koyle’s enterprise.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “A Warning Voice” *Deseret News* 2 August 1913. The original “First Presidency Message,” was signed by LDS President Joseph F. Smith. It was reprinted as: “A Renewed Warning to Members of the Church” *Deseret News* 29 December 1945, signed by church president David O. McKay. For a thorough examination of the church’s opposition to the mine between 1913 and Koyle’s death in 1949 see Christianson, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 21-30.

<sup>41</sup> See Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 60; and Christianson, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 35; also, a personal interview by the author with a descendant of Lars Olsen, Dec. 17, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 59. Both Kraut and Pierce discuss the specific visions, as do various personal interviews in Graham, “The Dream Mine.” The vision given the most weight is one in which Koyle predicted that a proposed LDS Temple in Mexico would never open, counter to a public statement by President Joseph F. Smith. Koyle claimed he had been right when the Saints fled Mexico in 1912, and pointed to this as a source of “jealousy” among the First Presidency. See Fife, *Saints of Sage and Saddle*, 282, and Christianson, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 57-58.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986) describes the general authorities’ investments in the Dream Mine, 296.

D. Michael Quinn reads the LDS Church's opposition to the Dream Mine as a rejection of the magical treasure quest that was fundamental to early Mormonism and a turning away from "superstitious and schismatic" practices that characterized the life of Joseph Smith. Quinn writes: "While a few Mormons continue to believe the folklore of the treasure trove ... they do so in spite of the clearly stated opposition of the twentieth-century church."<sup>44</sup>

Yet, there was a larger ideological battle commencing that framed a growing divide. After 1890, Mormonism began a move toward the American religious mainstream. In this, the church recast the history of Joseph Smith, shifting its doctrinal emphasis away from a treasure-seeking founding prophet who dabbled in folk magic and promoted plural marriage, to a man called directly by God to restore His one true gospel. Thus, as the Mormon Church abandoned polygamy and other tenets originally introduced by Joseph Smith, LDS leaders simultaneously sought to renew members' confidence in the authority of the founding prophet. The church elevated the importance of Joseph Smith's divine calling, and stressed the miracle of the "First Vision," the 1820 appearance of God and Jesus Christ to the boy prophet. When the church memorialized its prophet in 1905 with a granite monument at Joseph Smith's birthplace in Vermont, it sought to identify "what about his legacy mattered to the LDS Church."<sup>45</sup> Similarly, as Pierce and Kraut crafted the story of the Dream Mine, they purposefully linked Koyle with Joseph Smith in a manner that stressed the legacy both men shared as key figures within God's plan.

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<sup>44</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 210-211.

<sup>45</sup> Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 110. For an examination of the Mormon transition to modernity, see chapter five.

At the same time that the LDS Church refocused the history of Joseph Smith, leaders of the faith also began to gradually quiet its eschatological temper. As the church shifted, Dream Miners were marginalized and denied their role in the divine drama. In response, many of them held fast to their faith in the last days and reiterated their support for Koyle. As Kraut put it, “This opposition only proved to give new strength to the Bishop. It was clear that the Lord was sustaining him and his mission at the mine.”<sup>46</sup> Yet, it would take more than faith in a man to sustain them as critical players in God’s plan.

Church opposition and the threat of excommunication led Koyle to cease mining for nearly six years between 1914 and 1920. Still, Koyle’s followers and investors remained dedicated to the cause, their faith shored up by a new millennial vision of the mine’s destiny given to Koyle by two of the Book of Mormon’s Three Nephites. They offered Koyle startling new revelations of an economic catastrophe awaiting the nation: a deflated dollar, rampant unemployment, and hunger, all triggers of the end.<sup>47</sup>

During the shutdown, believers preached Koyle’s prophecies of the coming end times, and when the mine reopened in September 1920, work recommenced immediately. Believers pressed forward on the main shaft “as fast as miners with hand drills and powder could drive a tunnel into solid mountain rock.”<sup>48</sup> As the excavation encountered the different geologic formations that Koyle had reportedly predicted, his prophetic reputation grew. Hundreds of people visited the mine to see firsthand the confirmation of

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<sup>46</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 77.

<sup>47</sup> Christianson, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 42.

<sup>48</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 33.

prophecy. Many stayed to work on the mine, content to receive their pay in stock. Soon the main shaft had descended 2,200 feet.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> At the time it reopened, the Koyle Mining Co. owed some \$2,000 to the Spanish Fork Co-Op, which was a subsidiary of the LDS Church owned Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution, and some have suggested the likelihood that Church authorities softened their stand against the Dream Mine so the company could reopen and hopefully pay off its debts. See Christianson, "Historical Study of the Relief Mine," 47-48. Even today, Koyle is affectionately referred to as the Bishop, even though he was removed from that position by the Church just before the six-year shut down.

## A CHANGE IN FOCUS: THE DREAM MINE AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

The momentum of Koyle's forecast of economic depression accelerated in June, 1929. Koyle awoke one morning and predicted that in four months – to the day – “Wall Street will crash. ...Thousands of people on every side will be going busted.”<sup>50</sup> When the market plunged in October, the story quickly spread that Koyle had foretold the catastrophe. People gathered again at the Koyle farmstead not far from the mine to hear his predictions of the coming peril. He regularly updated his prophecies with new details from revelation received while asleep.

With renewed energy, in 1932 Koyle's followers supplied money and labor to build a state-of-the-art mill, sometimes called the “White Sentinel,” near the mouth of the Dream Mine tunnel for Koyle's predicted outpouring of gold. As the return of Jesus neared, the Dream Mine reached its zenith. Dollars and workers flowed into the mine. The end times were at the door and the Dream Mine was about to “come in,” believers said. “The money came in almost miraculously,”<sup>51</sup> remembered Pierce, who was at the Dream Mine when laborers began building the mill. With all indications seeming to point to the immediate fulfillment of Koyle's prophecies, stockholders “scraped the bottom of their Depression-worn pockets to raise the money needed to buy the equipment” that would refine the ore into the gold to finance the gathering of Israel.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Christianson, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 11, quoting the recollection of Carter Grant, from an interview in 1959.

<sup>51</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 70.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

The giant mill never fulfilled the promise. Since it became operational in 1936 it has only processed one load of ore, netting the company \$103.03. By 1937, the mill shut down, and in 2008 it stands on the mountain empty and quiet. But true believers are unshaken. In the words of Ogden Kraut: “When the Lord releases these riches, then the White Sentinel will become like an ensign to the nations for a place of relief.”<sup>53</sup>

Koyle, who turned 80 in 1944, kept faith alive with a long list of prophecies. “Hardly a year passed without several new [dreams] being related, many of which saw rapid fulfillment,”<sup>54</sup> remembered Norman Pierce, who spent more and more time with Koyle as he grew older. Some of Koyle’s prophecies failed, such as his prediction that Russian soldiers would soon overrun America. Believers still drew sustenance from other revelations, such as Koyle’s forecast of Japanese surrender in 1945.

Even as Koyle’s reputation declined, the LDS Church reminded its flock that it would brook no challengers. Koyle was brought before a Mormon ecclesiastical court, where he was given a choice: issue a statement denying his revelations of the Dream Mine, or face excommunication. On January 8, 1947, the church-owned *Deseret News* carried his decision under the headline: “John H. Koyle Repudiates All Claims Regarding the Dream Mine.” The newspaper reproduced a notarized statement bearing Koyle’s signature in which the old bishop sustained the LDS president and “appeal[ed] to all my followers to join with me in this repudiation of claims to divine guidance in connection with this mine.”<sup>55</sup> But the matter would not close. Within days, Koyle repudiated the

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<sup>53</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 141. Later, some stockholders alleged that the sample had been “spiked” to show artificially elevated levels of selenium in the ore, by an engineer eager to sell his equipment to the mine, see Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 73, and Christianson, “Historical Study of the Relief Mine,” 35.

<sup>54</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 88.

<sup>55</sup> “John H. Koyle Repudiates All Claims Regarding Dream Mine,” *Deseret News* 8 January 1948, 1. Pierce calls this episode the “most difficult test of [Koyle’s] lifetime, for he had often sincerely said that he valued his membership in the Church more than all the gold in the world,” *Dream Mine Story*, 93.

statement. He claimed that he had been forced to sign the declaration, and swore that every prophecy was true.

Koyle was excommunicated on April 15, 1948. He died just over a year later, May 17, 1949, at the age of 84. Ogden Kraut eulogized the man he considered a prophet: “Christ never saw the triumph of His Church while He lived; the Prophet Joseph Smith never saw the redemption of Zion while he was alive; and Bishop Koyle never realized the materialization of the ore deposited in that mountain. But in the Last Days they all shall see the fulfillment of their vision.”<sup>56</sup> If LDS authorities believed that his death would close the mine, they were quickly disappointed. Even though no mining has occurred in decades, the dream continues.

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<sup>56</sup> Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 179.



## VINDICATION DEFERRED: MODERN BELIEF IN THE DREAM MINE

As Koyle's contemporaries died, they passed their stock to a new generation of believers who could only remember the Bishop in his later years, if at all. Today's stockholders know of the Dream Mine second-hand, through the yellowed stock certificates they inherited and the stories swapped among the old-timers of Utah County. Recently, the internet has tightened the community of believers by fostering more frequent communication and interaction, supplementing the annual stockholders meeting. Just as it always has, the Dream Mine attracts believers as an investment in the magical origins of their faith, and in a destiny that awaits ultimate fulfillment. While Koyle lived, it seemed that the moment was imminent. Signs pointed to the fast approach of the Last Days and the "coming in" of the mine. Yet every year, hope was deferred. In the six decades since Koyle's death, his followers have continued to read the signs around them, determined that prophecy was about to be fulfilled.

With Koyle dead, Dream Miners had lost the prophet who focused most intently on the end times. In his absence, they would find little spiritual support for eschatology in their mainstream Mormon ward houses, for the LDS had deemphasized such teaching. Mormon leaders, rather than look to the end of the world, preached instead of the present and the need to shore up personal morality and build strong families.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> In a study of the Mormon general authorities' rhetoric at the church's biannual General Conferences between 1850 and 1979, sociologists Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd found that references to eschatology declined strikingly. Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, "Mormonism in Secular Society:

Dream Mine believers, however, could still embrace tightly their key roles in the end time drama because they found encouragement in the religious great awakening that followed World War II. Christians, both fundamentalist and evangelical, saw signs that God had reentered history. The recreation of the state of Israel in 1948, exactly one month after Koyle's excommunication, suggested that the prophetic clock had begun to tick again. "When are the times of the gentiles [non-Mormons] to be over?" asks one Dream Mine believer in the internet group devoted to Koyle and the mine. "The scriptures tell us that we can recognize it by the sign that the Jews will begin to gather in Israel. Is it just coincidence that 1948 brought about Koyle's ex[communication] at the same time that the Jews began to gather?"<sup>58</sup> Dream Mine believers would soon have more than enough divine signs to know that they were digging in the right spot.

In his study of twentieth-century eschatological belief, historian Paul Boyer visualized the various levels of commitment of end-time believers as concentric circles. At the core were devotees committed to preparing themselves and others for the apocalypse. A middle ring of believers were uncertain about precise doctrine but nevertheless maintained faith. An outer circle of secularists cared little about apocalyptic doctrine though they never completely escaped its influence.<sup>59</sup>

While the chapter and verse of Dream Mine eschatology differs from more broadly-accepted Christian apocalyptic belief, the idea of concentric circles is a helpful way to visualize the faith of Dream Mine stockholders. Or, to use investment terminology, the concentric rings of Dream Mine faithfulness can be visualized as:

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Changing Patterns in Official Ecclesiastical Rhetoric," *Review of Religious Research* 26 (September 1984): 35-36.

<sup>58</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/7686>

<sup>59</sup> Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); He touches only briefly on LDS eschatology, see 288.

“Buy,” “Hold” and “Sell.” The core, the “buy” group – which encompasses diverse kinds of Mormons – actively proselytizes the mine, disseminating Koyle’s prophecies and participating in frequent online debates about when mining will begin again to usher in the Last Days. “Hold” group members are content to sit on their stock, many only vaguely aware of the Dream Mine narrative. The outer ring, the “sell” crowd, tends to contain people who inherited stock and do not hear the hoof beats of the approaching apocalypse. While open to suggestion from true believers, they are typically ready to sell for the right price, often for \$30 to \$35 per share, sometimes for as much as \$50.<sup>60</sup>

At the core of the true believers is Doc Hansen, currently the Dream Mine’s chief promoter. In his mid-fifties, Hansen is a devout member of the LDS Church who was raised in Utah County. As a boy, Hansen says, he was “fascinated” by the Dream Mine although he knew very little about it. “I saw the zig zag [of the road] going up the hill, and the big, white mill, and it always attracted me,” Hansen remembers. Today a chiropractor whose Utah County office holds a book shelf with dozens of titles about the Last Days by evangelical writers, Hansen finally decided to investigate when he was a high school senior. He found Norman Pierce’s book in the public library and was convinced of the “truthfulness” of the narrative and Koyle’s calling as a prophet. Although it would still be many years before he bought his first shares in the mine, Hansen was committed. “If you’re meant to be connected with the project the spirit just grabs you and yanks you into the project,” he says.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Members of the Dream Mine internet group regularly post notices seeking stock, and, less regularly, offering it for sale. In August 2008, stock was advertised for \$35 per share, see <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/12891>, while that same month a poster looking to buy offered to pay \$50, see <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/12940>.

<sup>61</sup> L. DeLynn “Doc” Hansen, interview by author, 26 October 2007, Orem, Utah.

The core group also includes Kevin Kraut, son of Dream Mine chronicler Ogden Kraut and an avowed “fundamentalist Mormon” with faith in principles such as plural marriage that have been long abandoned by the official church, which today excommunicates members who practice or espouse polygamy. Kraut, like other Dream Mine faithful, draws support for his Dream Mine belief from non-Mormon sources, including the prophetic utterances of an online evangelical group known as the “Prophecy Club,”<sup>62</sup> as well as a former orthodox Jew who converted to Mormonism and wrote a number of books about the Last Days as foretold by the Old Testament’s Book of Isaiah.<sup>63</sup>

It is no surprise that Kraut and other Dream Mine believers find support for their faith in sources beyond a Mormon perspective. Evangelical Christians, in particular, possess an end-time vision that corresponds with the eschatological impulses of Dream Miners. Over the last third of the twentieth century and into the first decade of the twenty-first century, American evangelicals produced countless books, recordings, pamphlets, videos, and websites designed to track the world’s relentless march toward Armageddon.<sup>64</sup> Informed primarily by the Book of Revelation, evangelical Christians look for the predicted signposts along the way. Some have already occurred, such as the creation of Israel and the return of Jerusalem. Other events await fulfillment: the rise of an antichrist, the establishment of a sinister “new world order,” an unlocking of secrets hidden with the Old Testament, as well as wars, plagues, and natural disasters like

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.prophecyclub.com>.

<sup>63</sup> See, for instance, Avraham Gileadi, *Isaiah Decoded: Ascending the Ladder to Heaven* (Provo, Utah: Hebraeus Press, 2002).

<sup>64</sup> A seminal text on Biblical prophecy from an evangelical Christian perspective is Hal Lindsey, with C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), which sold over 35 million copies and spawned a billion dollar end-times industry.

earthquakes and floods of growing intensity. The evangelical scenario of the Last Days complements the eschatological vision of the Dream Mine faithful, with one key exception. Many evangelical Christians believe in the rapture, when God will lift deserving Christians to heaven and save them from the trials of the Last Days. Neither Dream Miners, nor Mormons in general, place their faith in the rapture.

Among Dream Miners, the members of the core “buy” group share one important attribute; they believe with certainty in the ultimate fulfillment of Koyle’s many prophecies and frequently see signs of their imminence. Like twentieth century evangelical Christians, Dream Miners look to the biblical preaching of Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel, and the New Testament Book of Revelation, to inform their eschatological worldview. They point to Israel’s capture of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967 as confirmation of biblical prophecy. They also quickly note that Joseph Smith predicted this event and understood its significance. Like evangelical Protestants, the Dream Mine core believers anticipate the rise of an antichrist and see evidence of his pending ascent in assorted worldwide conspiracies and cabals. “The destruction and fiasco will begin [with] the full mobilization of the New World Order...the Antichrist is closely following,” predicts one dedicated stockholder in a September 2004 internet posting, which adds: “The Bible details horrible judgments and plagues, famines, earthquakes, wars, water contamination and much more” before the mine reopens.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/6748>. For Joseph Smith’s prophecy that “Jerusalem must be rebuilt,” see Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, 121 and Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon Cook, editors, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 180. Modern Dream Mine believer Kevin Kraut says that the Israeli presence in Jerusalem is “a step toward the fulfillment of all [Koyle’s] prophecies,” Kevin Kraut, interview by author, 18 November 2007, Genola, Utah.

In the twenty-first century, devout Dream Miners connect in cyberspace, exchanging prophecies and opinions via an internet group on the Yahoo network titled “The Dream Mine: We Are Keeping the Dream Alive.” It was Doc Hansen who first purchased stock in the mine in the 1980s and founded the e-group on Sept. 10, 2001, the eve of the terror attacks in New York City and Washington D.C. Though reluctant to attribute this timing to divine guidance, Hansen says: “It was the night before 9/11, and I got the distinct impression [to found the e-group] and when I get those distinct impressions, I don’t question it, I just do it...It was meant to be, and as a result believers came out of the woodwork.” In its first seven years, the e-group has attracted close to 1,000 members and received over 12,900 distinct posts. “I had about twenty people join right away, and it kept growing faster,” Hansen remembers. “I have people e-mail me privately to say, ‘I was led to this.’ People have dreams that lead them to this group.”<sup>66</sup>

Although posters to the group are cyber-anonymous, their messages offer insight into the perspectives of current Dream Mine movement members. Many posts scrutinize Koyle’s prophecies in the light of current world events—wars, famines, earthquakes, and other disasters. Conflict between Russia and Turkey was one of his predictions. Eager for the end of time, a 2007 e-group poster declared: “Keep an eye on Turkey. Some interesting things are going on over there now. ...Climate Changes, Volcanoes, Current Events. ...Preparedness is a lot like Insurance; you have to have it before it is needed.”<sup>67</sup> Koyle had said that war will rage on the coastline of America, and an army of 100,000 Russians will invade North America through Canada. In the Middle East, America’s

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<sup>66</sup> L. DeLynn “Doc” Hansen, interview by author, 26 October 2007, Orem, Utah.

<sup>67</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/11841>

armies will falter. A worldwide famine will send prices skyrocketing for basic staples like rice and wheat.<sup>68</sup>

Postings on the Dream Mine e-group tempt believers with the recurring certainty that the end is at hand. “The mine will open up in the fall season,” wrote one poster confidently in October, 2001. “Will it be this fall after an economic collapse? Who knows? It has been a long hot summer. :-) Who has a farmer’s almanac? What is this winter supposed to be like?”<sup>69</sup> That post was challenged by another core believer, who wrote simply: “The mine can’t open yet. Not for 2-4 years. The parameters don’t fit yet.”<sup>70</sup> Within two days, the initial post had generated a dozen responses, a cyber-argument about the merits of the original premise: that the mine would “come in” immediately. Once a string ends, another posting will reinvigorate the cyberspace conversation. A reading of a new sign, an earthquake, rising gasoline prices, a falling dollar, the increased value of gold, compels the Dream Miners to speculate if Koyle’s prophecies line up with the latest hints that the time is now. The true believers are flush with anticipation. As one asked in an April 2008 message to the group:

Is THIS the year? We are VERY close to the mine becoming active, and I think that Utah will be where the New Economy begins, and that the Dream Mine will help to bring back America from the brink of absolute economic devastation. ...Thank God I live in Utah, and near the mine.<sup>71</sup>

Posts to the e-group also dissect biblical revelations: “One of the strange enigmas of the world is the total ignoring of Bible prophecy as it comes true with complete accuracy,” notes a 2003 message posted less than a month after the United States

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<sup>68</sup> Kraut, Relief Mine, 190-191.

<sup>69</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/283>

<sup>70</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/294>

<sup>71</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/12778>

launched its invasion of Iraq. “As one studies the news headlines and reads the various accounts about what is being said in Washington, it becomes clear that the Bible prophet Habakkuk's vision of America invading the Middle East and taking it for itself draws closer by the day.” The post recommends a video that makes the case, called “The American-Babylon Connection” that “will prove to you that America is Babylon and shows you in great detail why this is so. It is all happening right under your nose.”<sup>72</sup>

Core-group Dream Miners, like evangelicals, seek to “decode” the mysteries of the Bible to confirm their beliefs. Bible codes that search for esoteric information and secret prophecies allegedly encrypted within the text of the Old Testament have a long history. They grew in popularity during the 1990s and early 2000s. Dozens of popular books on the subject by evangelical Christians have appeared and include such titles as: *Bible Code Bombshell: Compelling Scientific Evidence That God Authored the Bible* (2005), *The Original Code in the Bible: Using Science and Mathematics to Reveal God's Fingerprints* (1998) and *Future Prospects of the World According to the Bible Code* (2002).<sup>73</sup> In posts to the Dream Mine e-group, believers repeatedly dissect these codes to reveal a hidden story soon to unfold, confirming their beliefs. “The Bible codes seem to indicate that there will be an economic collapse between October of 2005 [and] October of 2006,” writes one Dream Mine believer in January of 2005. They also look to Bible codes to validate Koyle, as in a 2004 post by Doc Hansen, which claimed that Hebrew scholars had examined the Bible, “plugged in everything about Koyle,” and found hidden

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<sup>72</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/2683>.

<sup>73</sup> Edwin Sherman, *Bible Code Bombshell: Compelling Scientific Evidence That God Authored the Bible* (Los Angeles: New Leaf Publishing Group, 2005); Del Washburn, *The Original Code in the Bible: Using Science and Mathematics to Reveal God's Fingerprints* (New York: Madison Books, 1998), and Joseph Noah, *Future Prospects of the World According to the Bible Code* (Boca Raton, Florida: New Paradigm Books, 2002).



messages that predicted the founding of Dream Mine and confirming its divinely sanctioned role in the end times.<sup>74</sup>

The Dream Mine scenario, if paralleling the beliefs of evangelical Christians, has a distinct latter-day theme and bears Koyle's and Mormonism's imprint. The view from Utah County predicts that before the mine reopens, the American dollar will become "worthless," and the federal government will collapse. The LDS Church will be "set in order," an enigmatic phrase about which believers regularly deliberate. An especially difficult winter will afflict Utah County in the year the mine comes in, followed by spring flooding and a dry, scorching summer. With the area's weather remarkably consistent with this pattern, Dream Miners are always ready to predict that the mine is about to come in. Geneva Steel, a manufacturing plant in Utah County, will close down, something that did happen in 2001.

Clearly, the Dream Miners are busy not only interpreting the signs, but in sharing knowledge and building the community that will collectively bring in the mine. In addition, messages on the e-group announce the monthly weekend work projects at the mine, in which stockholders gather to make minor improvements to the property in anticipation of the day when the mining work will resume. Furthermore, the e-group regularly receives messages updating the price of gold and offering advice on how to survive the coming trials. It also facilitates stock exchange between members of the "sell" group and the "buy" group.

The core Dream Mine community tolerates difference among its members. They are invariably Mormon, although the character of Mormon beliefs ranges widely. There

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<sup>74</sup><http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/7664>; and <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/6764>.

are “orthodox” or “mainstream” LDS who adhere to the teaching of church authorities in Salt Lake City, along with so-called “fundamentalist Mormons,” people who are no longer members of the mainstream LDS Church largely because they espouse practices, such as polygamy, that were part of early Mormonism but were jettisoned as the faith evolved beyond its nineteenth century origins. Similarly, “lapsed” Mormons of various stripes are welcome in the community.

Still, depending on the nature of their Mormon belief, core believers use the Dream Mine narrative in different ways. Mormon fundamentalists, who are at odds doctrinally with the LDS hierarchy, emphasize the story of church opposition to Koyle as evidence of official error and unworthiness. For faithful members of the LDS Church, the opposition of authorities in Salt Lake City and especially Koyle’s excommunication pose problems. Some reconcile the dissonance by contending that the excommunication never actually occurred.<sup>75</sup> Others maintain that Koyle was posthumously reinstated in the church.<sup>76</sup> Still others argue that Koyle, before his death, received a “second anointing” – a little-known temple ceremony that believers say is reserved for those Mormons who have been guaranteed entry into the highest level of heaven and have the favor of God.<sup>77</sup>

The middle group – the “hold” group – includes mainly mainstream Mormons who possess stock as a statement of belief, but do not have the sense of fervor and certainty exhibited in the core group. “We still have some stock; we just don’t think all that much about it,” says Mark Koyle, a great-great-grandson of the mine’s founding

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<sup>75</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/11058>.

<sup>76</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/11056>

<sup>77</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/349>, Kraut, *Relief Mine*, 182. For more about the second anointing see Buerger, David John. “‘The Fulness of the Priesthood:’ The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (Spring 1983): 10-44, also, Brooke, *Refiner’s Fire*, 245.

prophet. “If [the prophecies] are [proven] true someday, then I guess we’ll think about it then.”<sup>78</sup>

Some officers of the Relief Mine board of directors, despite their authority over the day-to-day function of the business operation, fall into the “hold” category. Boyd Warren is a board member who owns stock and meets monthly with other officers of the mine, but does not insist on the “literal acceptance of everything [Koyle] said. ...I might be willing to believe in it, but I don’t want to say any more than that.” Warren adds that he views the core group of believers as “generally a bunch of kooks.”<sup>79</sup> Warren considers the Relief Mine Company a business with a colorful history, not a spiritual endeavor. He will not comment about his faith in Koyle’s prophecies.

Other stockholders who fall into the middle ring are more willing to discuss the Dream Mine. Often, these moderate Dream Miners urge their more ardent counterparts to restrain their fervor with a dose of mainstream Mormonism. “[Koyle] would be quite upset and disappointed to know that there are people that profess a desire to be a part of the Dream Mine, but do not follow the [LDS] Prophet,” writes a middle-ring stockholder in a 2007 post to the e-group. “He does not want to be treated as a prophet. He wants to be treated as a man who was blessed with inspiration for his stewardships. His council to his family was to always remain faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which means following the Prophet.”<sup>80</sup>

Another post asks for a critical examination of Koyle’s prophetic abilities and the Dream Mine’s destiny:

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<sup>78</sup> Mark Koyle, telephone conversation with author, Nov. 8, 2007.

<sup>79</sup> Boyd Warren, telephone conversation with author, Nov. 9, 2007.

<sup>80</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/11860>

There is nothing wrong with [q]uestioning. In fact, those who don't are the ones who will never understand completely what the principles are, nor how they work. I think that one must have a curious mind and an open mind for the spirit within to be able to work and grow to its fullest. I also don't feel the conflict between the mine and the church should cause a conflict within one's mind and nature as long as one or the other don't [sic] become fanatic in nature.<sup>81</sup>

Beverly Kingsford, a stockholder and sometime e-group poster, reflects the ambivalence of this group's members and the conflict they feel. A devout Mormon from Utah County who backed the libertarian-minded Ron Paul in the 2008 Republican presidential primary, Kingsford first learned about the Dream Mine from Hansen during a chiropractic session. "Frankly, I thought it sounded quite strange, but I was curious," Kingsford remembers. "I read what [Hansen] gave me, and I couldn't put it down. I felt like it had to be true. There were too many things – miracles – that happened to Bishop Koyle and the early miners to believe it was all some man-made thing."<sup>82</sup> After praying for spiritual confirmation of the mine's place in the divine plan, Kingsford received personal testimony of its truthfulness and purchased \$5,000 worth of stock. She hopes for a chance to purchase more before the Last Days arrive.

Kingsford, like the other middle-group Dream Mine believers, finds evidence in Koyle's story that gives her a stronger testimony of her Mormon faith. Still, her conflict is apparent, as she writes:

The one thing that is very hard to accept about the dream mine story, is that Bishop Koyle prophecies [sic] that one day the church will be set in order. Now, that means that the leadership at that time will be out of order somehow and the church in general will not be as it should be. Now this is a real test for those of us who are active in the church and want to stay that way [but] I do believe that the mine will eventually bring forth gold and I have [purchased]

<sup>81</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/11865>

<sup>82</sup> Beverly Kingsford, letter to author, Nov. 28, 2007.

stock in it and I will buy more if I can. To be a Dream mine believer, you have to believe that these things are going to come to pass and that God will protect His people when the terrible things start happening. I believe that we are very close.<sup>83</sup>

If middle group members are in denial or conflicted, this cannot be said about members of the outer circle of Dream Mine stockholders. The “sell” group shares a general disbelief in Koyle’s prophetic ability and shows a lack of interest in the Dream Mine narrative. One member of the outer ring of stockholders is Juanita Perry, an 83-year-old woman from West Valley City, Utah, about 50 miles north of the Dream Mine. Perry recently sold 200 shares of stock to a member of the e-group for \$30 a share. A lifelong member of the LDS Church, Perry describes herself as a devout Mormon who is active in her ward, or congregation. In the 1930s, she and her husband lived in Utah County and in the midst of the Great Depression he began working for Koyle in his spare time, helping to build the processing mill on the mountainside and accepted Dream Mine stock in lieu of pay. Over time, Perry’s husband became convinced that the mine was on the verge of coming in. “He was a real thinker,” Perry recalls of her husband. “He was very interested in history, and the more he got to know the story, the more he believed in it. He really had a strong testimony in the whole [Dream Mine] thing.” When Perry’s husband died in 2007, he bequeathed his 200 shares of stock to the couple’s three adult children. “They never really understood what it was all about, and they really never saw any truth to it,” Perry says, explaining her family’s decision to sell.<sup>84</sup>

Members of the “sell” group typically do not know much about Koyle or his Dream Mine. Secure in their Mormonism, these “sellers” see nothing in the Dream Mine

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Juanita Perry, telephone conversation with author, May 17, 2007.

narrative worth excavating. Still, members of the outer ring occasionally use the e-group to chide true believers, as in this 2001 post from a doubter whom Hansen, the group's founder, was trying to convince of the mine's divine importance:

Doc [Hansen] must have put me on this list because I am a skeptic, just so's [sic] everyone could have one heckler in the group to keep things buzzing. ... Why not spend the money people are spending on stocks, to buy up food right now? Grain is cheap now, but in panic and shortages, no amount of gold will buy it. In food shortages, no one will sell it to anyone with any amount of gold... I've read the Ogden Kraut book [about the Dream Mine], and I say he was a good man, but I think he was off, on this one. ... Sign me 'still skeptical' Jeanette.<sup>85</sup>

Other members of the outer ring care little about the faith of true believers, and use the e-group to profit from the urgency felt within the core group. Yet, even with sellers often making more than \$40 per share for their yellowing family heirlooms, the core group of buyers is not resentful. In fact, core believers often express a sense of superiority toward the sellers, rueful about the denial of their prophet. "I feel sorry for the people who are selling all of their shares," writes one 2008 poster to the e-group. "Some of them even had their shares given to them, rather than having to struggle and go without in order to afford to buy them. How sorry they will be someday when they realize what their lack of faith, vision and wisdom has cost them."<sup>86</sup>

Faith such as this is certain to keep Koyle's dream alive long into the future. As signs appear that seem to confirm to believers the approach of the apocalypse and the accuracy of Koyle's prophetic gift, Dream Miners will continue their treasure quest. The Dream Mine stock market will not close as long as the miners dream that the enterprise is the sole chance to save a people, a faith, and a nation.

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<sup>85</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/28>

<sup>86</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Dream-Mine/message/12640>

## CONCLUSION: THE PERSISTENCE OF BELIEF

In digging the mine, dreamers found an earthly kinship and a divine calling. The Dream Mine, steeped in Mormon history, myths, and symbols, offered shelter to a wide spectrum of believers. By reading a book, purchasing stock, or clicking a mouse, they became participants in a divine drama that united the kingdom of God to Utah County. With their eyes on Joseph Smith, they accepted Bishop Koyle's call to live their faith and save the world. Curiously, they took the leap of faith as Mormons, by embracing the fervent eschatology of modern-day Christian evangelicals. In this, they felt closer to the roots of Mormonism, a return to the true gospel. Unlike their evangelical counterparts, who will ascend to heaven during the rapture, Dream Mine believers expect to be fully engaged in end-time tribulations and working to fulfill God's purpose. Dream Miners keep one foot in the sacred past. With its roots in the supernatural traditions that all Mormons share, its rich lode of collective Mormon folklore, and a fate linked directly to the eschatological precepts of the early LDS Church, the Dream Mine has an appeal that is accessible to a variety of believers who share a common set of fundamental Mormon values. If some abandon modern Mormonism on this journey, others ignore the dissonance in their minds to hold fast to official authority and their shares of stock. The Dream Mine story, in the minds of believers, does not contradict their Mormon faith. It augments it. The Dream Mine narrative attracts believers because, like the jagged, rocky paths that crisscross the hills around the excavation, it offers them traction within their larger Mormon faith. Koyle's story, and the destiny of his mine, lures hundreds of

Mormons who comprise a dynamic community of faith set within, and at times against, the larger hierarchical church. For Koyle's believers the mine provides a subterranean passageway to the world of Mormon roots and a portal to the divine drama of end time for which God established the Mormon Church.

Today, housing subdivisions sprout like wild mushrooms in the wide-open tracts of land beneath the Dream Mine, which were farms in John Koyle's day. Newcomers look up at the cone-shaped mountain to the east and wonder about the odd-looking derelict building that sprawls within a cleft in the rocky mountainside. But for Dream Miners, the truth always lay beneath the surface. They recall that in the days just before John Koyle died, before the cessation of digging and after his excommunication, the old bishop made one final hike up Dream Mountain. On the site of the mine, squinting out over the fields where he had spent most of his life, he experienced a last vision.

He saw a "small rift in the dark clouds revealing a little spot of blue." Then, as he watched, this spot of blue expanded, the skies opened, and "the mine and its surroundings were restored to the brilliant sunshine of a fine glorious day with all oppressiveness having vanished away."<sup>87</sup> True believers are certain that this final vision was God's promise to Koyle that his life was not in vain, nor would their lives be so. They remain, as Koyle's faithful follower Norman Pierce declared, "prepared, mentally and spiritually, to be steadfast in watching and waiting for a glorious vindication that they know will come."<sup>88</sup> Only death will shake them from their commitment.

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<sup>87</sup> Pierce, *Dream Mine Story*, 52.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 102.



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